

Poems of the Farm

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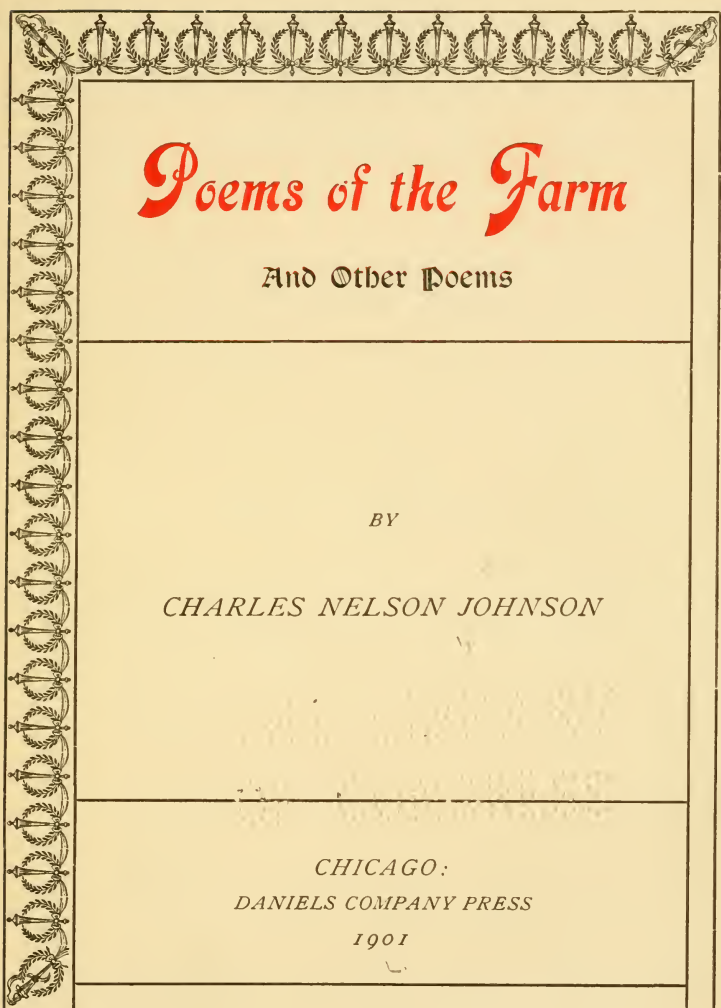


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Poems of the Farm

And Other Poems

BY

CHARLES NELSON JOHNSON

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THESE poems are not presented to the public with the slightest pretension to merit. In truth they are not—strictly speaking—presented to the public at all. Some of the author's friends having become familiar with a few of them, and possibly stirred by the bias of a personal regard, have expressed a wish that they might be placed between covers. This is the sole excuse for their publication. They are intended only for friendly eyes, with the conviction that they would scarce pass muster minus the protecting veil which an indulgent charity might naturally be expected to cast about them.



The Father's Farewell.

So ye're bound ter leave the homestead,—the old log house an' barn?
Ye think there's somethin' better fer a likely chap ter larn.
'N turnin' up a furrer with a stubborn yoke o' steers,
Or trompin' in a haymow, like *I've* done all my years?

Wall, son, I ain't a sayin' but what ye may be right.
This grubbin' 'mongst the thissels *ain't* much better'n a fight
Fer daily bread an' butter, an' mostly skimp at that.
It's a tasteless lot o' lean with some stragglin' streaks o' fat.

And yit,—hold on a minute,—don't boost yer hopes too high;
Ye may git disserpinted 'bout the way your kite 'll fly.
The city folks are strangers and their hearts don't all beat warm;
Ye may sometimes wish ter goodness ye was back upon the farm.

Doin' chores may be tejus but there's lots o' things that's worse;
What ye're countin' as a blessin' may turn out ter be a curse.
I've seen scores of farmer fellers leave the country fer the town,
An' I've seen 'em slinkin' back again with heads a-hangin' down.

They went away too proud ter wear patches on their pants ;
They said they'd have a tailor suit as soon's they got the chance.
But they come a trompin' homeward in shoes with thinnest soles,
An' sure enough no patches—but their britches full o' holes.

An' yit, again, I 'low ye that ain't no reason why
'At you should make a fizzle like such common sorter fry.
You're made o' different timber, else ye ain't no son o' mine,
Ter say nothin' o' yer mother an' her ancient fam'ly line.

Sence ye're bound ter try yer fortune off in the world alone,
Tackle everything afore ye with a will as hard as stone.
Jest buckle up yer galluses an' show yer native pluck ;
Pitchin' inter things real spunky's jest another name fer luck.

Make yer mark thar in the city ; make it big, 'n' broad, 'n' wide,
So't we'll see it in the papers—see yer name writ side by side
With the best they've got among 'em—men we hear so much about ;
Show 'em 'at ye're somethin' smarter'n an ignorant country lout.

But son—don't get reckless—don't let yerself grow wild ;
Remember 'bout yer mother—you're her first, her only child.
She'll be kneelin' ev'ry night beside that same old cornhusk bed
Whar you was born—whar *you* hev knelt—her hand upon yer head.

An' when the cows come up at night and all the things is fed,
An' mother's gone an' closed the door to pray beside the bed,
I'll set thar in the doorway, lookin' out toward the west,
A-thinkin', thinkin', thinkin', long afore I go to rest.

I'll be thinkin' 'bout the glitter, 'bout the gas an' 'lectric light,
An' all the glarin' sparkle of a city street at night.
I'll gaze out past our cornfield 'n' see a flashy, swell serloon,
An' I'll wish ye home that minute, under yonder stars an' moon.

But I didn't mean ter say so much—I meant to say good-by.
I thought you'd know jest how I felt, an' yet it seems 'at I
Hain't ever *felt* like this afore—my boy so nearly gone,
An' me an' mother—jest us two—a-livin' thar alone,

Same as 'twas back thirty year—*except* 'at *now* we're *old*,
Our hearts a-gittin' warmer while the years seem growin' cold.
But son, yer train's a comin'—must be somethin' in my eye—
You'll let us hear—you'll come—you'll—God bless ye son! Good-by!

Our Quarrel.

You wouldn't b'lieve it, would you, to see us old folks now,
That once we come nigh partin'? Fact is, we hed a row,
And I was jest determined to hev my stubborn way,
And Sairy vowed she wouldn't live with me another day.

'Twas all about religion, too—tarnation fools we was—
A man ain't damned for what he b'lieves, it's jest for what he does ;
And I ain't sure he's damned at all, if we could know the truth,—
That doctrine don't seem fit to teach to either age or youth.

Well, Sairy she was Baptist, and b'lieved in dippin' deep,
While I was born a Methodist and thought a soul would keep
With jest a little sprinklin'. So we got the Testament,
And purty warm and airnest at the argyment we went.

Sairy pinte out the passage where the 'postle Philip led
The eunuch *down into* the stream, and claimed it plainly read
In Matthew third and verse sixteen how Christ himself was dipped,
When the spirit fell upon him like a dove with wings all clipped.

She said she wa'n't no preacher with an eddicated mind,
But when it come to readin' she wa'n't exactly blind.
An' nen she put the question with such a sneerin' look,
Where I'd find a sprinklin' passage in all that sacred book?

I reached across the table to where the Bible lay,
And slow, and mean, and mockin', said I'd nothing much to say;
But when I *did* attempt to speak I liked to deal with facts,
And ast her if she'd ever read the second of the Acts.

And if she'd kindly tell me how three thousand souls or more,
All standin' there together, assembled on the shore,
Could be immersed by such a few, and in so short a time?
Sez I, "The projec' seems to me a *leetle* too sublime."

Well, Sairy hitched her chair around and turned her back to me,
And set there jest as spunky mad as any bumblebee.
An' nen I went to whistlin' sort o' off-hand like and mean,
Till Sairy couldn't stand it, and jest let go her spleen.

I ain't a-goin' to tell you all the spiteful things we said—
How Sairy with her apron to her eyes wish't she was dead;
And how I slunk away and set out on the garden fence—
It's all past now; them days hev gone; we've never quarreled sence,

II.

How was it 'at we made it up? Well, r'aly, neighbor, I—
I hadn't thought you'd ast me that,—I wish't you'd passed that by;
For every time I think of it it makes this old heart sore,
And yet I s'pose 'twon't hurt me much to shed a few tears more.

Well, neighbor—see them little shoes behind the bookcase door,
Jest on the other side the glass, where the paper curtain's tore?
(I made that ragged hole myself—it wa'n't no accident,
I made it so's to see them shoes each time I came and went.)

Well, neighbor, them there shoes was wore on a little pair of feet,
By the purtiest little baby girl,—so innocent and sweet,
She jest crept into both our hearts and broadened out our love,—
We almost thought her better'n the angels up above.

There's no use tryin' to tell you how that baby looked in white.
You can't describe the sunshine more'n to say it's heaven's light;
And I can't describe that baby with words hows'ever fine.
More'n to say 'at she was Sairy's—more'n to say 'at she was mine.

The time we hed the quarrel the baby lay asleep,
A-smilin' at the angels as they come to play bo-peep.
I b'lieve if she'd a-been awake we'd never quarreled so,
For it 'ud soften any heart to hear her chirp and coo.

I almost spoke to Sairy afore I ever thought,
When we was at our supper and babe lay in her cot
A-makin' pretty noises; but I wouldn't speak the first—
A quarrel 'bout religion makes a man shôw out his worst.

I was doin' up the chores afore I went to bed,
When Sairy come a-screamin' to the barn 'at *babe was dead!*
I felt a sudden sinkin'—my heart was standin' still!
I turned and staggered blindly up against the fannin' mill.

I couldn't believe my senses, 'twas all so cruel quick.
I jest stood there a-tremblin'—feelin' faint, and scared, and sick,
Till all at once I started and almost flew away;
Next minute I was standin' by the bed where baby lay.

She'd been a-climbin'—how it happened—O God! I cannot tell,
But the spot burns in my mem'ry where our darlin' baby fell.
We laid her in the orchard where the blossoms come an' go,
And we've never quarreled sence that day—that day so long ago.

The Drunkard.

You ask me about my hist'ry?

Well, seein' it's you, I'll tell,
But if any one else had asked me
I'd tell 'em to go to—well

Lady, you'll have to excuse me
If my talkin' isn't perlite ;
I've been livin' so long in the gutter
That I don't know black from white.

An' these smashed up bones is a-painin'
So bad I can hardly think,
But to start with, I can't remember
The time when I didn't drink.

I drunk when I was a yearlin',
At least that's what they said ;
I drunk at ten like a soaker,
With father and mother dead.

They died—one in the prison
An' the other one in the pen.
'Twas lucky it happened that way,
Because—they was sober then.

So you see—but never mind it,
I ain't a grumblin' at fate;
No excuse, I suppose, for a lusher
Who guzzles it early an' late.

Well—I drifted an' drifted, as useless
As a sodden log on the tide;
Or more like a miser'ble carcass
That's sold for taller an' hide.

Nobody cared for the drunkard
An' the drunkard cared for none;
Well, lady—that's so—beg pardon,—
I guess mebbe there *was* one.

An' you know who that was, lady,
For whenever I went to your door
You gev me kind words an' a blessin',
An' things to eat by the score.

An' I thought, lady, you was an angel,
For how could it be otherwise?
When humans was cussin' me always
You met me with kindness an' sighs.

Whar hev I been this last summer?
Well, lady, I jest stayed away;
I wasn't fit comp'ny for angels,
Or people who prosper—an' pray.

So I slunk back into the gutter
Where drunkards like me oughter be ;
An' I kept on a-drinkin' an' drinkin'—
'Twas the only comfort for me.

But last night I somehow was sober,
An' so along about dark
I gev bummers' alley the go-by,
An' slept all night in the park.

This mornin' the sun was a-shinin'
As bright as the middle o' day
When the copper got onto me sleepin'
An' told me to mosey away.

I sneaked to git red of the copper,
An' walked till I happened to see
Some children a-playin' an' rompin';
The sight was like heaven to me.

An' so I jest stood there a minute
To see what the children would do,
When a carriage came up with a rumble
An' who should get out but you !

I seen you reach in for your baby
An' dandle her out to play ;
I watched the little thing toddlin',
It seemed I jest had to stay.

So I slunk out o' sight by some bushes
An' lay there a-feastin' my eyes,
Till the baby was through with her playin'
An' the sun climbin' high in the skies.

I watched till you got in your carriage
An' then was a-sneakin' away
When I noticed a racket behind me
An' turned an' heard somebody say

That a purse was stole from your carriage!
The coachman jumped from his seat
An' p'inted me out to the copper
Who hed jest come around on his beat.

An' he collared me quicker'n lightnin'—
There was no place for me to hide,
An' nen I saw you leave the carriage
An' fasten the baby inside.

An' you told 'em 'at they was mistaken,
'At *I* wouldn't do such a thing;
'At *you* and *me* was acquainted!!
Lady, if hearin' an angel sing

Is music sweeter'n *that* was,
Then angel singin' 'll do.
Why, lady, women *is* angels
When they're fashioned the same as *you*!

I come nigh fallin' with faintness,
But jest then I heard a scream,
An' turnin' I saw your carriage
Dragged after a runaway team!

I saw a small face at the window—
The little white face of your child!
I tore myself loose from the copper,
An' run like a man that was wild!

I knocked down the people about me;
My feet fairly made the grass burn!
I flew straight across the park commons
To where the carriage must turn.

I got there ahead, an' the horses
Came tearin' right at me like mad,
Their eyes bulgin' out o' their sockets—
But the danger jest made me feel glad!

I jumped like a rocket right into
The jaws of that runaway hell!
I landed me true, for next minute
Both horses an' drunkard fell.

In the midst o' the strugglin' an' trampin'
My body was ground in the dirt;
But lady, the angels may tell you
How good it can feel to be hurt!

Why—lady—what is it 'at ails you?

They said 'at your baby was safe.

. . . . You're weepin' for *me*? Why, lady.

I'm a drunkard--was born a waif—

An' I never was good for nothin'

An' now I never will,

For the doctors say I'm elected

An' must pay my long, last bill.

So, lady, it's no use cryin'

Over sech a worthless wreck;

Jest let me slip out on the quiet

An' hand Saint Peter my check.

For I've only the one to offer—

The one of the runaway;

An' lady, d'ye think that Peter

Will take it an' let me stay?

You think he will? God bless you!

Then it's best for me to go,

For a drunkard this side o' Jordan

Don't gin'rally git much show.

An' I've only one thing to ask you,

One thing before we part—

That you'll forgit the drunkard's drinkin'

An' remember the drunkard's heart.

An Old Boiled Dinner.

You may talk about your ices
Filled with gastronomic vices,
You may talk about your soups so thin—or thinner,
On your menus polyglot ;
But there's nothing hits the spot
Like a steaming, fragrant old boiled dinner.

I have tried your cutlets breaded,
I have eaten frogs beheaded
Just between the lumbar plexus and the legs ;
I have ordered lobster salad
(Wretched theme for any ballad),
I have even deigned to dine off fishes' eggs.

I have tasted macaroni,
Which may well bespeak me lunny ;
I've had oysters *a la* Newburg on some toast ;
I have reveled deep in patties,
Tackled tripe, whatever that is.
Had a stew, a fry, a broil, a fancy roast.

I have had my pulses quicken
At the thought of prairie chicken,
I've been favored with a taste of mallard duck ;
I have raised a dish's cover,
Found beneath a steaming plover,
And have felt myself in rarest kind of luck.

I've so far ignored good breeding
That I've caught my fingers feeding
Me potatoes that were dried up like a chip ;
I have tested pig's feet potted,
Tried limburger rankly rotted—
Vilest stuff that ever passed beneath a lip.

I've been served by cooks so Frenchy
And by negroes, oh, so wenchy—
I've been fed on *a la* this and *a la* that ;
But, in faith, somehow or other
I prefer an *a la* Mother,
And the old pine table where I've often sat.

For with all the modern dishes,
There is nothing suits my wishes—
Nothing makes me feel so kindly and so good
Toward every saint or sinner
As an old boiled dinner,—
It's a homelike, satisfying sort of food.

With its vegetable mixture
And its beef a constant fixture,
With its odor tuning up your appetite ;
All its solids so nutritious
And its juices so delicious,
It's a dish on which to work, or love, or fight.

Then beside, it doth engender
Thoughts of home so true and tender,
Thoughts of those who used to gather round the board
In the days of sere November;
Ah, those days I well remember,
Days when hearts, and bins, and cellars, all were stored.

So you may laud your latest,
Your most unique or greatest,
Your fashionable modern table d' hote ;
But for me the only winner
Is an old boiled dinner,
And I'll sing its praise while I can pipe a note.

Diggin' Turnips in the Fall.

I've worked upon the railroad, and I've tended country store,
I've slumped around a sawmill, midst the buzz, an' slam an' roar.
I've druv a yoke of oxen to a lank, old-fashioned sled,
And I've raked and bound in harvest till I wisht 'at I was dead.

I've helped to run a thresher,—'twas 'fore they used the steam,—
When the lazy, mopin' horses kept a feller on the scream.
I've even turned a grindstone ; but the worst—and best—of all
Was the days we froze our fingers diggin' turnips in the fall.

'Twas the windin' up of summer, gittin' ready for the frost,
Which sometimes caught us nappin', as we've figgered to our cost.
Quite a jump from br'ilin' August, with the sun a burnin' ball,
To the crisp and chill October, diggin' turnips in the fall.

Now and then we hed some sunshine, when the turnip tops would nod
Softly in the autumn breezes, flirtin' with the golden rod
Scattered all along the fences, peepin' out behind a wall ;
Then the weather 'peared to favor diggin' turnips in the fall.

Other days was dark and dreary, all of nature in a frown,
With the sleet a cuttin' at us, and the rain a peltin' down ;
With the mud a-stickin to us and the sky just like a pall,
Then the weather 'peared agin us, diggin' turnips in the fall.

But the weather made no diff'rence; let the days be good or bad,
All the family hed to mosey—Bub an' Sis, an' Mam an' Dad,—
With a wagon and two hosses, balky Bill and spavined Doll,
Joltin' round a-dodgin' stone heaps, diggin' turnips in the fall.

First the tops, jest turnin' yaller, hed to fall before the hoe;
When you missed the turnip sometimes, whack 'd go your sore toe,
'Less you hed a pair o' boots on,—most of us hed none at all;
Barefoot girls an' boys was plenty, diggin' turnips in the fall.

Next the harrers pulled the turnips—dragged 'em from their summer beds,—
Sent 'em sprawlin' helter skelter, with their heels above their heads.
Then us youngsters hed to pick 'em, big or little, great or small;
Every mother's son an' daughter, diggin' turnips in the fall.

In the wagon humpty-bumpty, never lookin where they lit,
Never carin' 'cept to guess how many more would fill the pit.
When we hed the box a heapin', all the lanky team could haul,
Then we blowed our stiffened fingers, diggin' turnips in the fall.

As the last load started homeward, wheels a saggin' in the ground,
Dad a-drivin'—wagon rockin'—turnip tops strewed all around,
Then us youngsters started yellin'—half a whoop and half a bawl,—
Tickled 'cause at last we'd finished diggin' turnips in the fall.

But the work was not all drudg'ry, for we hed a heap o' fun—
Whack a feller on the jacket with a turnip top and run.
Start a game o' toss and catch 'em, with a turnip for a ball,
Soon's Dad's back was turned a minute, diggin' turnips in the fall.

Then one year I well remember, Perkins' turnip field and ours
J'ined together: nothin' 'tween 'em, 'cep some rails, an' grass, an' flowers.
Betty Perkins, snug an' han'some, always hed been ruther shy,
Sence I handed her some posies, hoein' turnips in July.

Leanin' 'cross the stake an' rider, watchin' how she hung her head,
Lookin' at her purty figger,—ain't a-tellin' what we said;
But the blushes softly flashin' redder than her crimson shawl,
Meant a weddin' shortly after turnip diggin' in the fall.

Doin' Chores on the Farm.

In the winter when the farmyard's buried deep beneath the snow,—
When the strawstack droops despondent, beat by all the winds that blow,—
When the kitchen, 'round the cook stove, is the only spot that's warm,—
Then's the time it keeps you hoppin' doin' chores on the farm.

In the mornin' bright and early, just before the break o' day,
Crawlin' out from under blankets where you'd give the world to stay ;
Tuggin' at a pair o' cowhides frozen stiff from over night,
Pullin', strainin', stampin', shiverin' in the dim, uncertain light.

Reachin' for the smoky lantern hangin' underneath the loft ;
Hard to git the thing a goin' 'nough to make the taller soft.
Startin' out toward the stable, every breath a frosty whiff,
Snow a-squeakin' under footsteps—nature just a frozen stiff.

All at once you hear a clatter when you reach the stable door ;
Body'd think that them there critters never hed ben fed before.
Horses pawin', cows a-bellerin', tie-chains clankin' everywhere,
Cattle crowdin' 'gainst the mangers, noise enough to split the air.

Hurry up and snatch some fodder, give a taste to every one,
Jest enough to keep 'em quiet till you git the cut feed done.
Mix it up with meal and water ; all the while keep watchin' out,
Brindled Bess may push the trap-door open with her pokey snout.

Wheel and whack her with the shovel, yell like fury, "Out o' that!"
Cow jest shakes her head fer meanness—hit her nose another spat!
Bess is always lean and hungry; makes no diff'rence what she eats,
Like some folks 'at you and I know—reg'lar bread and butter cheats.

But the steers that we're a-fattenin', they're the boys to show their feed!
Heap their mangers full o' fodder, give 'em all the straw they need.
Let 'em waller in their beddin', chew their cud in quiet ease,
Other folks 'at you and I know take some comfort jest like these.

(Didn't start to make a moral—ain't exactly in my line,
Still it jest occurred 'at maybe livin' high ain't all so fine.
While the steers may seem the sleekest, yet it isn't hard to guess
That the one to live the longest will be lean old Brindled Bess.)

When you have the feedin' finished and the critters crunchin' it,
Blow the lantern out an' listen—pay you well to hark a bit;
Such a soothin' sense o' comfort! Ain't no music half so sweet,
'Cordin' to my feeble mind, 'n jest to hear a critter eat.

Talk about your concertinas, or your fiddles, or your flutes,
Though they make a feller have a sorter itchin' in his boots;
Yet they can't begin to give him such a sense o' seemin' warm
As the crunchin' of the cattle eatin' fodder on the farm.

Makes you feel like havin' breakfast, so you close the stable door.
And you mosey for the kitchen, where the cookstove's in a roar.
Oh, the smell o' mother's cookin', jest whets up your appetite,
Till you fling your hat and mittens, wash your hands and grab a bite,

After breakfast when it's daylight carry water to the stock ;
Clean the stables, groom the horses—have it done by eight o'clock,
So 'at when it ain't too stormy you can take the team and sled
To haul the wood and split it, and pile it in the shed.

Then at night again it's chore time, 'fore you've hardly turned around ;
The days seem short as hours when the snow is on the ground.
The lantern and the moonlight have to do a heap o' work,
In fact there ain't no quarters round a farmyard for a shirk.

When you hang the lantern on a peg and start to move about,
You hear the same old bellowin' and see the same old snout.
It's just a repetition of the mornin' to a dot,
You could carry out the program with your eyes shut, like as not.

And I guess 'at most o' farm work runs along about the same—
You do a thing and do a thing until that thing gits tame ;
And yet of all the doin's either in or out o' doors,
There's none 'at suits me half so well as just a doin' chores.

When you've gone the rounds and fastened everything all safe and tight,
And heaped the stalls with beddin' and closed the doors for night,
You think of all the critters sleepin' there so snug and warm,
And you can't help sort o' likin' doin' chores on the farm.

The Storm at Snow Island.

(AN INCIDENT BASED ON FACT.)

From the Snow Island group to the town Saint Ignace
Is twenty odd miles by the crow ;
And the lumberman Urie, entranced by the place,
Made the Islands his home long ago.

'Twas a region of storms on a rock-begirt coast,
Where the surf pounded hard with a boom,
And the government light, like a great gray ghost,
Made a flickering spark in the gloom.

The lumberman's wife was a child of the breeze.
In her nature was never a note
Of music so sweet as the rustle of trees,
Or the wind through the sails of her boat.

The guiding of fate set her sailing one day
From the town to her home in the wilds ;
Her song was as soft as the mermaid's lay,
Her buoyancy that of a child's.

But a blot on the sky gave her sudden alarm,—
She glanced at her babe in her lap,
Who gurgled and smiled and recked not of harm,
While the sails made an ominous flap,

She counseled her crew (two land lubbers they)
To trim down the boat snug and tight !
But the threat of that cloud brought them instant dismay,
And rendered them palsied with fright.

She sprang to the helm, trimmed the craft into shape,
Lashed her baby secure to her knee,
While each of the crew, like a petrified ape,
Stared hard at the turbulent sea.

The darkness sank down like a pall o'er the dead ;
The elements raged in their might ;
The boat was oppressed by the wind overhead,
Underneath it was tossed like a sprite.

It staggered and rolled and hurried away,
Then threatened to heave end on end ;
The babe and the mother were dripping with spray,
And the mast was beginning to bend.

The woman cried out in a fear-stricken note
For the lubbers to shorten the sail,
But they groveled in terror deep down in the boat,
And left her a sport of the gale.

The boat made a plunge in a trough of the sea,
And shipped the white crest of a wave,
Then shuddered and groaned like a top-heavy tree,
Or a wreck sinking into the grave.

Another such plunge and the boat must succumb.

Mrs. Urie, with added concern,
Loosed the babe from her lap, and, trembling and numb,
Stowed it carefully down in the stern.

She fastened the rudder, and, waiting her chance,
Dashed ahead to the bending mast,
And reefed down the sail, while the boat like a lance
Cut the waves to the tune of the blast.

Then staggering aft o'er the forms of the men,
She guarded the rudder once more,
And, straining her eyes, sought again and again
For the sheltering line of some shore.

The Goose Island bank lay sullen and low,
Like a coiled and knotted rope,
Where the frothy surf, with its ebb and flow,
Seemed a mockery more than a hope.

But to leeward she bent in her desperate stress,
Resolved to endure to the last,
The bank might abate the wind's rude caress,
And the anchor might hold the boat fast.

Meanwhile, at her home on the Snow Island shore,
The husband, returning from toil,
Was greeted by naught save the waves' sullen roar,
In their ceaseless advance and recoil.

Man the boat!" rang his words as he turned from his door,
To the lumbering men in the yard.
Why surely not so," said the men, puzzled sore,
"While the tempest is raging thus hard!"

Then waving his hand like a seer in distress,
Through the thickening, spray-moistened air,
'Wifie's out yonder!" he cried, "Heaven bless!
She's out on the lake—*somewhere!*"

Like a charging brigade to the cannon's mouth
The men made a rush for the boat,
And scanning the sky from the north to the south,
Soon lifted her leaping afloat.

The husband, with hand gripping hard by the mast,
Peered anxiously under his palm,
And beating the gale back and forth, short and fast,
Hoped hard against hope for a calm.

But the treacherous wind seemed to mock his despair,
And the darkness was gathering down;
He appealed to the water and prayed to the air,
But his pleading was met with a frown.

An hour had passed; an hour—an age!
With a grief-stricken crew for its prey;
And naught in the power of prophet or sage
Might reckon the cost of that day.

But suddenly rose, like a peal from the skies,
A cheer by the man at the mast!
And nearing Goose Island to leeward, their eyes
Saw a fluttering pennant at last!

That night at Snow Island a bonfire was made
By some rough, rugged men on a crest;
But the happiest man was the one in the shade
Pressing wifie and babe to his breast.

The Preacher and the Calf.

The Reverend Amos Triteheart was a minister of renown ;
He was famed throughout the country far and wide and up and down,
As a man of grace and learning, with a calm and contrite mind,
And a soul so full of fervor he was scarce of human kind.

His face was pale, his hands were soft, and his body lank and thin.
He was clad in clerical garments that reached from heels to chin.
He seldom smiled or jested and was never known to laugh,
Till one day a loving sister gave him a beautiful Jersey calf.

The calf was mild and timid, with innocence in its mien ;
Its great brown eyes stared softly, its coat shed a golden sheen.
Its ears were broad and expressive of the guileless spirit within,—
The minister wished his human flock were half as free from sin.

And when it played in the meadow, or frisked among the trees,
The preacher laughed till the echoes were borne on the evening breeze.
And the people, hearing, marveled that such a thing could be,
For none had borne so long a face as the Reverend Amos T.

The calf grew up amazingly and filled the preacher's heart ;
He'd ne'er before loved a living thing, and he vowed they should never part.
It came to be idolatrous, so at least the sisters said,
And with many a sigh they " wisht the land that Jersey calf was dead !"

One Sabbath in the summer time—a bright and blistering day,
The Reverend T. was home alone—the milkmaid gone away.
He marked the hour of service near, and, sermon in his head,
He started out, then stopped up short—the calf had not been fed!

He scanned his watch, the time was near when he must lead in prayer.
He looked toward the church and saw the people gathering there.
He thought about his Sunday garb, starched collar, cuffs and all;
He shook his head and started off,—just then he heard a bawl.

Again he stopped,—again he turned,—once more he shook his head;
He could not stand that mute appeal,—God's creatures must be fed.
He hastened toward the cellar door in nervous, anxious fear,
Lest he should be too late for church, and fail in duty dear.

He seized a pail brim full of milk that sat among the jars;
He lugged it up the cellar steps and placed it near the bars.
Then with a rope across his arm,—a rope too long by half,—
He climbed the fence excitedly and started for the calf.

The creature grazed beneath the trees as meek as any lamb;
It seemed to breathe the spirit of the quiet Sabbath calm.
It looked up at its master with wondering, lustrous eyes,
But when the rope was on its neck it seemed to show surprise.

A transformation scene took place,—the calf began to bolt,
And fetched the Reverend Amos T. a most unpious jolt;
Away they went, the calf ahead, the preacher in the rear,
Unable to determine whether this was fun or fear.

The calf led off among the trees with head and tail aloft ;
The preacher felt his anger rise,—he felt his collar soft.
He thought about his precious flock awaiting him at church ;
His thought was interrupted by a very wicked lurch.

The calf had wound the rope about a sturdy apple tree,
And stood and stared with feet apart at Reverend Amos T.
“So, Bossy, so,” he meekly coaxed ; his pleading was in vain ;
The moment he unwound the rope the calf was off again.

This time it led him down a slope, his coat tails flying wide.
He slipped and fell on hands and knees, then rolled upon his side.
He lay there panting in the sun ; his eyes were all aglare ;
The Reverend Amos T. came nearly letting out a swear !

“ Well, you may go to—go to *grass!*” was all the preacher *said*,
But what he *thought* no man may know. He saw the calf had fled,
And slowly rising to his feet he limped toward the place
Where he had left the pail of milk, great sweat drops on his face.

His clothes were ruined, his linen soiled, his throat was parched and dry,
His hands were burned with running rope and blood was in his eye.
But when he reached the pasture bars the calf had got there first,
And vainly forced its head between the bars to quench its thirst.

It could not reach the pail of milk,—the preacher grinned with glee,
“ You’ll die a thousand deaths !” he said, “ ere you get aid from me.”
Just then the calf looked in his face,—a look so starved and sad,
No one could think a calf like that was ever truly bad.

The Reverend Amos took the pail to lift it o'er the bars,
Like some forgiving soldier who'd been beaten in the wars.
Next instant he was deluged all down his Sunday front ;
The calf had bunted in the pail,—did e'er you see one bunt ?

Then backing up as if, perchance, to get a better start,
It pushed its nose deep in the pail and gave a sudden snort.
The milk flew out on every side and splashed the preacher's face,
And he, who'd ever been devout, that moment fell from grace.

“ You dinged ! you danged ! you wretched beast ! you ought to be chastised !
If you should change to Satan's shape, I'd not be much surprised.
Your winning ways have always been a sneaking, low pretense ;
I almost think I'd like to see your hide upon that fence ! ! ”

Then straightway turning toward the house, he looked forlorn and wan,
And ever after, folks remarked, he was a different man.
So you who listen to this tale, pray please restrain your laugh ;
Two things there are, not meant to match—a preacher and a calf.

The Old Soldier's Sentiments.

[Delivered at the Veterans' Entertainment, Illinois Club, Decoration Day, 1896.]

In the battles of the ancients, in the memories of the past,
Whene'er a war was finished it was hoped to be the last;
But the records turn the tables, and there comes a war again,
With prophesies that war *will* come so long as men are men.

And now we hear, in recent days, the echoes from afar,
Of foreign nations everywhere preparing for a war;
And even here in freedom's home—our own beloved land,
The penny-liners all insist that we must take a hand.

I think I've always noticed that when a war was rife,
Some writers seemed to take delight in stirring up the strife;
And while my comprehension may not be very wide,
I'd like to broach the subject from the veteran soldier's side.

I've been through Antietam, in the recent civil strife,
And had my share at Vicksburg, with a varied army life;
And while it may be glorious for the men who speak and write,
The glory gets diluted for the men who march and fight.

When you've slept out doors in winter, lying close beside your gun,
When you've marched all day in summer in the broiling southern sun,
When you've trembled with the ague till the world seemed trembling too
You've begun to grasp in earnest what a war is like to do.

In the morning, sore and sleepy, startled by the bugle's blast
Bolt upright with eyes a-staring—dreamed *that* fight had been your last !
Till you're wakened to your senses by the orders of the day,
And realize that war is something else than children's play.

Then in battle what a tempest storms about your heart—and head !
Charging through a broken battery, tramping on the quivering dead !
Spurting blood and flying splinters—tragic turmoil, yell on ye ! !
Nothing more or less, my comrades, than a pure and simple hell !

What are all the pomp and splendor, what are all the colors bright,
When the end of so much grandeur is to merely shoot and fight ?
What are all the glittering trappings, polished o'er and o'er again—
What are guns, and swords and bayonets, when they're made for killing men ?

What are all the glorious triumphs, when you're prone upon your back
With a bullet in your vitals, writhing, tortured, on the rack,
With your glassy, staring eyeballs peering upward through the glare
Of the heat-waves rolling o'er you in the stifling, sickening air ?

What are all the flaring headlines in the papers day by day,—
What are all the grand achievements that the orators portray,—
What are all the deeds of valor that are lauded far and wide,
When you see your comrades lying limp and lifeless, side by side ?

What are all the brilliant records of the officers and men,
When the dear ones round the fireside never see them home again ?
What is fame, and name, and luster, when the mothers and the wives
Lose their hearts and hopes forever,—when their soldiers lose their lives !

Little children, in their prattle, adding to a mother's pain,
Ask for Papa every evening in the twilight,—ask in vain ;
When the happy family circle mourns a sudden void revealed,
With the one who filled it lying on some distant battle field,

Aged parents, lone and helpless, listening with an anxious ear,
Begging news of absent regiments,—news they'd better never hear ;
All the heartaches of the nation going forth from day to day,
Prayers of saints and prayers of sinners—those who seldom ever pray.

Ah, my comrades, these the glories, these the pageantry of war,—
All the land engulfed in mourning,—one continuous funeral car.
Desolation drear as ever pictured by a human pen,
Sacrifices most heroic—hearts of women, lives of men.

Such was that which racked our country in the fight for freedom's cause
And when other wars are mooted let us recollect and pause.
Soldier boys who fought and suffered,—men the bravest in the world—
They the ones whose hearts are lightest when the battle flags are furled.

Then let's gather round the hillocks, round the mounds of sacred clay,
Let us scatter flowers freely over Blue and over Gray ;
And while paying tender tribute to the memory of our dead,
Let us, when a war is threatened, trample on the monster's head.

The Horse Race at the Corners.

There aint' no use o' talkin', in these degen'rate days
They haven't got sech horses as what we useter raise.
Why, I can well remember when horses hed some grit,
So't when they started runnin' you couldn't make 'em quit.

Say, did I ever tell you about that famous race
'Twixt old man Chrysler's Chickasaw and Abs'lom Miller's Ace?
No? Well, sir, it jest turned the air to what you might call blue,
The way them horses skimmed the ground. Why, jinks! they fairly flew.

Jest how the race was brought about was down to Perkins' store,
With old man Chrysler drinkin' some and Abs'lom Miller more.
The old man wasn't much the worse, jest sorter meller like,
Declarin' he could walk a rope as easy as the pike.

From that they got to braggin', jest like they always did,
About the kind o' horses that one or 'tother rid;
And Abs'lom Miller, bluffin', said that he would match his Ace
'Gainst anybody else's horse that ever run a race.

And old man Chrysler, winkin' some, said Ace might take a trick,
But when it came to runnin' fast he'd stake his wealth on Chick.
And so they kept a badgerin', till finally Abs'lom rose
And shoved his long front finger under old man Chrysler's nose.

“I'll jest bet you the drinks,” he said, “that Ace kin beat old Chick,
And if you don't believe it you may name your liquor quick.
I'll run you from the Baxter woods down here to Perkins' store,
And if that isn't race enough, why, then I'll run you more.”

The old man shifted slightly and aimed some 'baccar juice
Square at the box o' sawdust pervided for such use;
An' then he gev one leg a toss across the other knee,
And kinder slow, saccastic like, but full o' spunk, sez he :

“I ain't a bettin' anything so 'tarnal small as drinks,
But if you've got a horse 'at you or anybody thinks
Kin beat old Chick a-runnin' (the idee makes me laugh),
Why, you kin win from witness jest two dollars and a half !”

The crowd looked up astonished, for money wasn't free
In them days at the Corners, along in sixty-three ;
And Abs'lom he was staggered, but only for a jiff—
He counted out the money and planked it down, kerbiff !

From that time till the runnin' there wa'n't much talked about
'Cept jest that big five dollars and how 'twould all turn out ;
And some allowed 'at Abs'lom was sure to win the race,
While others claimed that Chickasaw would wipe the earth with Ace.

The day came round and everything was ready for the start.
The one to send 'em off was chose to be Josiah Hart.
And Deacon Ezra Stapleton, the man who never swore,
Was made the jedge and jury, and stationed at the store.

When old man Chrysler rode along on Chickasaw so spry,
Towards the place o' startin', there was ginger in his eye;
And the crowd all whooped and hollered to see the old horse prance,
And ventured the opinion that the other hed no chance.

But when they started runnin' everybody held his breath.
The two were comin' neck and neck, a-streakin' like grim death,
When all at once old Chickasaw, a-wheelin', made a bolt,
And shook the old man Chrysler with a most terrific jolt!

The old man grabbed the horse's mane to keep from tumblin' down,
And set there, humped on Chickasaw exactly like a clown;
But soon he straightened up and gev the horse a taste o' switch,
And started him a leggin' it right down the turnpike ditch.

The old horse took the bit between his teeth and run like mad,
The old man yellin' fit to split and tuckin' on the gad.
Till Chick was jest a bilin', from the nostril to the flank,
A-runnin' sometimes in the ditch and sometimes up the bank.

But all at once he wheeled again, jest sorter sudden like,
And made a bee-line for the road and struck off down the pike,
To where the dust was flyin' thick, stirred up by Abs'lom's Ace,
Who heard the old horse comin' after him at such a pace!

It wasn't long afore old Chick was at the other's girth,
With both the horses peggin' in for all that they was worth,
And both the men a-larrupin' like Injuns in a fight—
'Twas worth a feller's lifetime jest to witness such a sight!

But soon old Chick was in the lead and hed the other beat.
He showed to Abs'lom's dusty eyes the bottoms of his feet.
An' then he went a-tearin' on, away past Perkins' store,—
It seemed he hadn't run enough, and so he run some more.

The old man sawed with all his might upon the horse's bit,
But Chick went streakin' down the pike as if he had a fit!
Till when they reached the cross-roads he, without a mite o' sense,
Jest jumped the ditch and straight ahead ran plump into the fence.

The old man shot across his neck and landed in the field;
He vowed that it would be a month afore his sores were healed;
But pickin' up his scattered traps he seized the horse's rein
And led him back toward the crowd, who yelled with might and main.

But all their yellin' stopped at once as Stapleton arose,
And in a high and twangy voice, a-speakin' through his nose,
Said he was ready to announce the winner of the race,
And stunned the crowd completely by announcin' Miller's Ace!

"Why, what in 'tarnal nation do you mean by sayin' that?
Old Chickasaw was in ahead,—you're blinder than a bat!"
And all sech like assertions came a-floatin' from the crowd;
But Deacon Ezra waved his hand and raised his voice aloud.

"Now, no one need to tell me which horse came in ahead,
I was standin' in this very spot and seen the thing," he said.
And while old Chick was in the first, what was his racin' like?
He run all over God's domain, while Ace stuck to the pike.

“And I’m a-goin’ to give the race to which one suits me best—
It don’t cut any figger what might chance to suit the rest.
I’m jedge an’ jury in this case, and I hev hed my say ;
I’ve said ’at Ace was winner, and it ain’t no other way !”

So there the matter ended, but the people ripped and tore,
And pestered Deacon Stapleton until he nearly swore ;
And yit I’ve often noticed that it always is the case,
Where men or horses jump the track they fail to win the race.

The Little Shoe.

I'd been out in the fight and frenzy,
In the desperate struggle and strife,
In the battle that men call business,
And came home wearied of life.

I dragged my coat from my shoulders,
And tossed my hat with a sigh,—
I threw me prone on the sofa,
With a hand pressed over each eye.

And yet I saw visions and visions
Of the turmoil and clamor and din,
Of the pitiful grasping for riches
By methods approaching to sin.

I rose to dispel those bad visions,—
Had just reached the library door,
When something arrested my notice—
Something lying upon the floor.

'Twas nothing of serious import,
Nothing tragic, uncanny or grue,
For the thing I saw lying before me
Was only a little shoe.

Only a wee baby's something,
Yet great as the world is wide,
Lying there just where she'd kicked it,
Topped upon its side.

'Twas worn and battered and crumpled,
But it set my heart in a glow ;
The buttons were lost or loosened,
And a great hole kicked in the toe.

I stooped and raised it and fondled it,
My breath came faster to think
Of the wee chubby foot that wore it,
The wee chubby foot so pink.

And I tiptoed into the bedroom
Where a cradle was standing still ;
I saw a baby foot peeping
As baby feet sometimes will,

Pushed through the rounds of the cradle,
Dangling so tempting and sweet,
I dropped on my knees beside it,
Close down by my dear baby's feet.

I clasped the warm lump of a "tootie"
Between the broad palms of my hands,—
I was instantly transported hither,
To fairer and happier lands.

The touch of that wee, tender handful
Sent a thrill through my uttermost part,
From the furthestmost tips of my fingers
To the bottommost depths of my heart.

'Twas so soft, and so warm, and so precious,
And I kissed it again and again,
And I thought a wee babe such a blessing
To be sent to the lives of men.

My kissing disturbed the dear sleeper ;
She drew in her foot through the rounds,
And turning, and tossing, and sighing,
Made such murmuring, baby-like sounds.

I rose and bent over the cradle,
And I gazed on her dimpled form,
Till the folds of the little pink nightie
Seemed a mystical mantle so warm.

I saw her breathe softly and gently,
Like the swell of an angel's sigh ;
And I turned with my eyelashes glistening
As the dew from a summer sky.

I'd forgotten the fight and the frenzy,
And the desperate struggle and strife ;
I'd forgotten the battle of business,
I was chastened and charmed with life.

My Little Caller.

Sunday morning while I'm dozing
Late beyond the wonted hour,
Seeking rest from week-day strivings
Stern, which brain and nerve devour,

Comes a ray of human sunshine,
Stealing softly to my bed,
Reaching up on little tiptoes,
Tugging gently at the spread.

"Papa, p'ease wate up for baby,"
Sounds like angel notes, I vow,
Followed by the worldly message,
"Becksus soon be yeady now."

Flinging quickly back the covers,
Grabbing up the dimpled dear,
Sitting her in bed beside me,
Soft curls tangling round my ear,

Soon forgotten all my dreamings,
All the world's vain show and pomp,
Even breakfast goes unheeded
In that royal morning romp.

When I sleep my last long slumber,
All I ask to seal my bliss
Is, that somewhere I'll be wakened
By an angel voice like this.

The Sand Man.

The Sand Man drops in every night—

The Sand Man with his sand ;
To sprinkle grains in little eyes
With unseen, unfelt hand.

He comes about the hour when all

The baby work is done ;
When toys lie scattered round the room,
Abandoned one by one.

A hobby horse once rocked with vim

Stands quiet in his stall—
A consecrated space between
The trundle bed and wall.

A jumping jack, an iron bank,

A painted rubber ball,
A rattle with a whistle on,
A bruised and battered doll.

A dozen little glittering things

So dear to baby land ;
But now the Sand Man comes around,
The Sand Man with his sand.

Two chubby little fists are forced
In two small sleepy eyes,
To rub away the sand which sifts
Across some tired sighs.

And now the Sand Man yields his place
To a fairy with a rod,
Who beckons toward that mystic shrine,
The babyland of Nod.

The Sand Man drops in every night,
The Sand Man with his sand,
To sprinkle grains in little eyes
With unseen, unfelt hand.

Spoiling the Baby.

“ Now, you will spoil that baby !”

I've heard it o'er and o'er,
While pacing back and forward
Across the nursery floor,

Hugging a precious burden

So tight it cannot peep,

“ Now you will spoil that baby

By walking her to sleep !”

But I continue walking,

For what else would you do,

If baby held her patties

So temptingly to you?

And what care I for theories,

Or maxims and the rest,

When baby cuddles softly

To sleep against my breast?

Old maids may be prophetic

And nurses ill at ease

But I shall walk my baby

As often as I please.

Trottie and Pattie.

Trottie and Pattie were busy,
As busy as they could be ;
 They had hustled around,
 And at last they had found
Enough mischief, as you shall see.

Trottie ran into the laundry,
And Pattie went splash in the suds ;
 'Twas jolly good fun,
 But they'd scarcely begun
When the nurse cried, " Off with those duds !"

She thought it would dampen their ardor,
But what did they care for that ?
 When the clothes were unhooked,
 And the elbows uncrooked,
They played they were " skinning the cat."

Then Trottie made straight for the window
Where Grandma had set up some plants,
 And Pattie reached up
 For a wee buttercup—
'Twould be folly to miss such a chance.

When Grandma spied what they were doing
She raised such a terrible din
That Trottie slipped out
And Pattie no doubt
Thought them both very guilty of sin.

But next they were into the pantry
Where the cakes and the sugar plums were.
They'd scarcely been in it
Much more than a minute
When half of the dishes were bare.

And then they ran off to the parlor
That was filled with such nice bric-a-brac.
Of course I am sure
Their motives were pure,
But they instantly seized on a plaque.

And so they kept on at their mischief
Till every one, all through the house,
Was quite in despair,
And yet, I declare,
At night they were still as a mouse.

And if you would know these wee youngsters,
So brim full of mischief and fun
Why, just call around,
And I think they'll be found
In a cot when their day's work is done.

For Trottie is two little tooties
That are constantly kept in a whirl ;
And—yes, Pattie stands
For two little hands,
And all are on one little girl.

Kiss the Spot to Make it Well.

In the realm of baby land,
'Mid the steps and stumbles,
Accidents on every hand,
Trials, trips and tumbles,

There exists a cure for all—
I the secret tell,
Whether it be bump, or fall,
“Tiss it, mate it well.”

Little fingers get a pinch
In the sliding door,
Little scream—a little flinch—
“Tiss it ; dreffle sore.”

Sudden trip of baby toes,
Followed by a yell,
Means a bump on little nose—
“Tiss it ; mate it well.”

Trotting round the dining room,
Head, just table high,
Strikes it like the crack o' doom,—
“Tiss it ; Baby ki.”

When the kiss has reached the spot
All is soon serene,
Even though, as like as not,
Spot turns blue or green.

Baby's logic, Baby's cure,
Might do well for us.
If our thoughts were half as pure,
We should profit thus.

And may Baby, all through life,
Be so near to bliss,
That she'll have each hurt or strife
Cured with a kiss.

Naming the Baby.

Naming the baby—what a time !
Tell it in prose or sing it in rhyme.
All of the prettiest names ransacked,
None of them sweet enough—troublesome fact.

Papa wants something quiet and prim,
Not any “hifalutin” for him.
Mamma, sedate, with a smile for the rest,
Pressing the darling so snug to her breast.

Sister, determined to have something sweet,
Myrtle, or Maud, or dear Marguerite ;
Pattie, or Pansy, or Mabel, or Belle,
Genevieve, Pearl, or lovely Estelle.

Brother comes romping in from his play,
Always has more than the others to say.
“ I’d call her something that means to be ’fraid,
’Cause that’s the way ’at most girls are made.”

Grandma sits nodding, with little to say,
Babies she’s named by the score, in her day ;
Maybe Rebecca would be just the thing,—
Has such a sensible, old-fashioned ring.

Cousins, and aunties, and friends, far and near,
All suggest something to call the wee dear.
Each thinks the other so wide of the mark,—
Confusion reigns high from daylight till dark.

All of the prettiest names ransacked,
None of them sweet enough—troublesome fact ;
Dear little dumpling, curled up like a ball,
Let's call her baby—just baby, that's all.

When I Come Home.

When I come home, all tired out,
Some little footsteps meet me ;
When I come home I never doubt
A little voice will greet me.

And oh, that tongue it wags so fast
With some such wondrous story
As how the circus band went past
In all its pomp and glory.

Or how the hobby horse won't go,
But balks up in his traces,
Or all about some furbelow,
On some new dress, with laces.

And how the burly butcher man
Has brought the dog some liver.
(The precious little black and tan
Who's always in a shiver.)

And oh, most wondrous thing of all,
The baby's started walking.
She waddles like a rubber doll ;
She'll surely soon be talking.

And news enough to fill a tome,
Of things that have transpired ;
And so, you see, when I come home,
I soon forget I'm tired.

My Baby.

If all the world were weary,
If all the world were sad,
Of course I'd not be joyous,
Of course I'd not be glad ;
But if all the world were weary,
All the world—ah, me !
I'd not be quite forsaken,
With baby on my knee.

Chirping her childish prattle,
Lisping her little song,
Binding my heartstrings tighter
With a baby's loving thong.
Making me free from sorrow,
Making me free from strife,
Making it seem that after all
There's something good in life.

If all the world were happy,
If all the world were gay,
Of course I'd not be sorry
That folks should have their way.

But if all the world were happy,
All the world—ah, me !
The world might pass if baby
No longer climbed my knee.

L.C.C.

What Is Home Without the Children?

What is home without the children?

Just a place to sleep and eat;
Everything so still—and tidy,
Everything so drear—and neat.

Nothing out of place or broken,
Not a sound to drive one wild;
Not a bit of heaven's music—
Prattle of a little child.

Not a hobby horse or wagon
Standing ever in one's way,
Not a pair of lips, red rosy,
Held for kisses every day.

Not a little shoe or stocking
Flung at random on the floor,
Not a string for driving horses
Fastened to the bedroom door.

Not a whimper from the cradle,
Waking one at dead of night,
Not a pair of bright eyes shining
Wide to meet the morning's light.

Not a dozen little trinkets
Lying scattered everywhere,
Not a little peal of laughter,
Not a sheen of golden hair.

Not an anxious look from Mamma
Lest the baby gets a fall ;
Not a room bestrewed with patches
After dressing up a doll.

Not a thousand cares and troubles
Children are supposed to make,
Not a myriad joys and prospects
Children never fail to wake.

Old folks dreaming in their dotage,
Settling down to foggy ways ;
Not a prank to shock them mildly—
Make them think of other days.

What is home without the children?—
Just an egg without the meat—
Just a nut without the kernel—
Just a sun without the heat,

Holding Baby's Hand.

Oft I'm sitting in the twilight
Close beside a trundle bed,
Where a pillow soft and snowy
Bears a little curly head.

And I listen unto music
Sweeter than the pipes of Pan ;
Sleepy rythms softly murmured—
“ Papa, hol-ey Baby's han'.”

Nestling, with its rolls and dimples,
Snugly in my monstrous palm,
Little restless busybody
Finds at last a sheltered calm.

Thus ordained am I to pilot,
Without staff and without rod,
Such a royal little traveler
To the wondrous Land of Nod.

In the world's great strife and battle
I but make a sorry fight ;
In the world's illumination
I but shed a feeble light.

Yet while void of force exalted
Great enough to stir the land,
I've a mission meek but mighty—
I can hold a baby's hand.

Papa Tum Home Early.

“Papa, tum home early,
And don't you wek too hard.”
That's what I hear each morning
As I pass out the yard.
The admonition mimicked
From older lips and dear,
Plays sweeter on my heart strings
Each time it greets the ear.

A little wrinkled nightie,
Fresh from the trundle bed,
A little heart so happy,
A little curly head,
A little footstep toddling
Beside me to the door,
A little mouth uplifted
For kisses by the score.

A little finger tapping
Upon the window pane,
To halt me at the gateway,
And make me look again.

A little pug nose flattened
 So white against the glass;
A little hand to wave me
 The last good-bye, alas,

Alas! if that were truly
 The last good bye—the last!
My heart would beat so lonely
 In a wilderness so vast;
With nothing but a memory
 To lend me daily cheer,
And “Papa, tum home early”
 A-ringing in my ear.

My Daughter's Birthday.

Mignon, Mignon, twelve years old !
Dear me, what a robber bold
Father Tempus seems to be,
Stealing little girls from me !

Making them young ladies fine—
Gone for aye is baby mine !
Wonder what the future holds
In its curtain's mystic folds,

For this bright-eyed girl of ours—
Whether thorns or perfumed flowers ;
Whether stormy days or bright,
Sunlight beams or shades of night.

All too soon some other man,
By a lover's subtle plan,
Shall usurp the place I hold—
Cupid's ways are passing bold,

But if fate doth so decide,
(And by fate I must abide)
Let me claim, as treasure trove,
Still a precious daughter's love.

My Hour.

There's an hour not recorded by the clocks of standard time,
Not remembrancer of summer nor a hint of winter's rime.
It's an hour quite creative—by a myriad fancies fed,
When the embers slowly smoulder, and the folks are all in bed.

Then I'm king in my dominion, with a little desk my throne,
Swarmed about by countless subjects, though I seem to sit alone ;
And I hold such sweet communion with the play-folk of my head,
When the night winds softly murmur and the real folk are in bed.

Nothing but a pen and paper, yet a world lies at my feet,
Waiting only touch of magic to portray the scene complete ;
Visions weird and visions wondrous, like a message from the dead,
Stealing softly through and through me, while the dear ones are in bed.

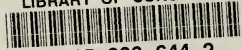
Harmless ghosts and little goblins—children of another clime,
Some sedate and others sportive—others lowly, some sublime ;
All are weaving with a fabric fine as any silken thread,
Tales and legends of the elf-land while the folks are all in bed.

Time is nothing but a shadow, space is spanned by winged thought ;
All the myriad things of daytime now appear as things of naught.
All the real and all the unreal, thus mysteriously wed
By this mystic ceremony, while the folks are all in bed.

Thus I sit in waking dreamland as the moments steal away,
Quite unconscious, while the clock is striking in another day.
What though half I think's unwritten, and the other half unread,
Priceless is this cherished hour when the folks are all in bed.

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